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ABSTRACT

A cultural lag exists between the expectations of new community college students and the faculty who teach them. Part-time students, the underemployed, women entering or re-entering the labor force, minorities, and those seeking new careers are today's clients. During the last decade, occupational faculty have become isolated from their areas of expertise, and models for occupational faculty development programs are lacking. Hagerstown Junior College (Maryland) initiated research into staff development for occupational faculty that resulted in an innovative strategy. Using data from a survey of local industry and an experiment with one teacher conducting a training program on-site, the college obtained a grant to place, over a five-year period, all its career faculty in a business or industrial setting to validate theory, study current practice, or apply problem-solving techniques. Criteria were developed for selection of faculty proposals to "return to industry." Five, out of seven, proposals were approved in 1978. Summative and formative evaluations of the projects illustrated the validity of on-site return to industry in areas related to teaching fields. In 1979, the second year of the project, nine additional proposals were approved, so that by the end of the 1979 cycle, ten of the college's 14 occupational programs will have had a faculty member return to industry and then to the classroom. (FC)

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BACK TO THE SALT MINES -

CAREER FACULTY RETURNING TO INDUSTRY

Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Summer Conference on Staff Development at the University of Texas in Austin and the 10th Annual International Institute on the Community College at Lambton College in Sarnia, Ontario.

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Introduction

It is no longer noteworthy that the student population served by the community college has changed, drastically. Part-time students, the underemployed, women entering or re-entering the labor market, minorities, those seeking new careers, and those making mid-life career changes are today's clients. The result is an older student, more consumer conscious, who is vitally concerned with the marketability of the associate degree or certificate.

It is noteworthy, however, that a cultural lag exists between the expectations of the new clients and those held by community college faculty members. Faculty were recruited, largely, in the sixties and early seventies. They came from graduate training programs or secondary schools. Few had attended community colleges.[1] Their expectations were clear; the curriculum was the first two years of a baccalaureate degree. Students came directly from high school, held "middle class" values regarding education, and were prepared for college-level work. The new clients have changed the accuracy of faculty perceptions but not the perceptions themselves.

Further, during the last decade faculty members have become isolated from their areas of expertise. Cohen and Brawer indicate that many faculty report reading no scholarly journals or journals related to professional education or teaching techniques.[2] During a technological revolution rivaling the industrial revolution of the 1870's, occupational faculty have been out of the business or industrial setting for as much as a decade.

The seventies has witnessed the emergence of a process to counteract Cohen and Brawer's characterization of the community college instructor as "recluse" - isolated, in an eddy away from the main stream of the discipline and the

institution.[3] The President's Advisory Council for Education Professions Development coined the phrase "staff development" in 1971.[4] Five years later, Centra described the staff development as attempting "to help faculty members grow in teaching effectiveness by sharpening their teaching skills and knowledge. Other practices try to help faculty better understand themselves and their institutions, or to try to foster better environments for teaching and learning."[5]

Current staff development programs do meet many of the needs of community college faculty members. Emphasis on teaching skills, learning strategies, and institutional renewal aid all those who participate. Conferences, sabbaticals, and subsidized graduate study keep participants abreast of changes in academic disciplines. A significant group of faculty and, therefore, their clients are not served by existing programs. Occupational program faculty draw their expertise from the work place. Their students seek entry into the job market upon completion of the degree or certificate. Also, part-time students use occupational courses to climb the career ladder. The incongruity between the needs of occupational faculty and existing staff development programs was discussed by this author in 1977. "Should the community have a say in the nature and direction of the staff development process? Should, in fact, the community be the source for the college's development program. . . . Much research is needed; a model would be invaluable."[6]

It is easy to request research and lament the lack of a model; difficult to do something about the need. The purpose of this presentation is to describe

how Hagerstown Junior College initiated research into staff development for occupational faculty and a resultant strategy.

The Return to Industry Process

HJC is concerned about the staff development needs of occupational faculty members. The college has fourteen occupational programs. The instructors who staff these programs have an average of seven years' teaching experience. They have not practiced their specialty in the work place for that length of time. A project conducted by the college during the fall semester, 1977, gave impetus to a "return to industry" strategy.

A local industry approached the college requesting that an in-plant training program be conducted for their first-line supervisors. A member of the college's occupational faculty, teaching in the management program, worked with the industry in designing and delivering the training.[7] His reaction to the program was: "I learned as much as the students. I gave them theory and they helped me validate its application." The concept of placing faculty in the business or industrial setting to validate theory, study current practice, or apply problem-solving techniques demonstrated potential for staff development.

HJC is located in one of the nation's thirteen Appalachian regions. A current priority for Appalachian projects is staff development programming that fosters the improvement of occupational education. Using data drawn from a survey of local industries and the first-line supervisors' case study, the college obtained a grant designed to return all of its career faculty to industry over a five-year period. The project began during the summer of 1978.

The goal of the project was quite specific. "Return to Industry will provide the opportunity for the occupational faculty of the college to reinforce, update, or expand the skills and knowledge required to keep current with changing technology within their professions."[8] Procedures were spelled out. The faculty member requesting return to industry was required to submit a proposal, including the specific area of specialization, the tasks to be undertaken, the time period required, and the resources needed to support the activity. Further, the faculty member had to identify the business or industry that would host the activity and provide evidence that the host agreed to participate. (See Appendix A.)

The initial year of the project tested the concept. A series of criteria were established to assess proposals. Included were: length of time "out of the field," nature and degree of technological change in the business or industry, relationship between the technological change and the college program, accessibility of a host, and application of the experience in the teaching-learning situation. (See Appendix B.)

Seven proposals were submitted for the summer of 1978. Five of them were sufficiently comprehensive to be approved. Participants represented the college's Electrical Engineering Technology, Mechanical Engineering Technology, Data Processing, and Management programs. Assessment of these five projects illustrates the validity of return to industry.

Project Assessment

The evaluation design for return to industry is tripartite. One part is formative; two parts are summative. The formative component is an on-site

assessment conducted by the Dean of Instruction or the participant's division head. The assessment is based on the objectives stated in the proposal document. The visitation is structured to include observation of the faculty member at work, discussion with the on-site supervisor, and dialogue involving the faculty member, supervisor and college evaluator. A summary report is prepared by the evaluator, reviewed by the faculty member and supervisor, then included in the project package.

The initial summative component is a review and evaluation report prepared by the on-site supervisor and reviewed by the faculty member. Content includes the impact that the faculty member's activity had on the operation of the host business or industry. Again, this report is reviewed by the faculty member and college supervisor, then included in the project package.

The final summative component is a plan prepared by the faculty member analyzing how the return to industry experience will be integrated into the teaching responsibility of the faculty member. The college supervisor reviews the plan, then adds it to the package to complete the project.

A review of the outcomes of the 1978 projects reveals the strength of the return to industry concept. The first outcome worthy of mention is that each participant was able to perform a service for the host business or industry. The on-site supervisors indicated that these tasks were desirable but of insufficient priority to be assigned to full-time personnel. Therefore, both the faculty member and the host benefitted. Another outcome was the increase in understanding that developed between the host and the college. Most of the on-site supervisors indicated a degree of apprehension

regarding the project at the outset. The concern was replaced with genuine respect for the expertise and diligence of the faculty members. A positive result of the increased understanding has been more placements for program graduates with those businesses and industries that participated in return to industry. Finally, hosts were unanimous in requesting continued participation. They indicated that the original participant was welcome to return. Further, they desired to have other faculty work with them. They have even requested participants from specific programs. A preliminary review suggests that the initial application of return to industry was fruitful. Participating faculty were unanimous in their enthusiasm for the project and evidenced no difficulty in applying their learning experiences during the 1978-79 academic year. The insight developed during the 1978 cycle has improved the 1979 projects.

Project Development

The 1979 application of return to industry shows a moderate rate of growth. Ten proposals were received. Nine were approved. Among them were modification of the two that had been disapproved in 1978. Two participating faculty are repeats; both are involved with different industries, developing different skills. The project that was disapproved failed to meet funding agency guidelines. An attempt will be made to redesign it to achieve eligibility. Eight occupational programs are represented in the 1979 group: Correctional Services, Police Services, Mechanical Engineering Technology, Early Childhood Instructional Aide, Nursing, Hospitality, Accounting, and Management. At the conclusion of the 1979 cycle, ten of the college's fourteen occupational programs will have had a faculty member return to industry.

An attempt will be made to conduct a combination third party review/ dissemination activity during the summer of 1979. Faculty and administrators from other colleges in Appalachian Maryland will form a visitation team. They will meet with participating faculty from HJC and on-site supervisors. The purpose is to improve the HJC program and to explore the possibility for project replication in the region. After one complete cycle and a second planning phase, return to industry seems to be meeting the staff development needs of occupational faculty.

Conclusion

Howard R. Bowen, in the W. K. Kellogg Foundation 50th Anniversary Lecture, offers a goal for community college education in the 1980's: "...each person has the right, and the obligation, to achieve the highest personal development of which he is capable. Higher education is an effective instrument of personal development, and it must be committed to the goal of personal development."[9] For the new clients of the community college, personal development means access to the world of work. The return to industry model assists occupational faculty in fulfilling client expectations. One hundred and forty-two years ago, Ralph Waldo Emerson described the scholar as a person who "must take up into himself all the ability of the time, all the contributions of the past, all the hopes of the future. He must be an (sic) university of knowledges."[10] As community college faculty members face the 1980's, the university of knowledge concept remains valid. Staff development is a critical support system; return to industry is emerging as a component critical to successful staff development.

Appendix A

HAGERSTOWN JUNIOR COLLEGE

Hagerstown, Maryland

Return to Industry
Proposal Format

I. Subject Matter Area

A. Indicate in brief compass the specific area of specialization to be reviewed, updated or increased.

B. Specify how the proposed project will be applied in your teaching area.

II. Objectives

A. Identify what you plan to do.

B. Indicate the time frame required to accomplish the task.

C. List any specific resources necessary to accomplish the task. If there is a cost involved, please attach a budget.

III. Location

A. Where will the project be conducted?

B. Is the business, industry or agency willing to host you while you conduct the project? Please provide evidence of the commitment, preferably in writing.

IV. Evaluation

A. A report detailing the accomplishments of the project will be submitted to the Office of Instructional Affairs.

B. An assessment of the individual's activity will be submitted to the Office of Instructional Affairs by the host agency representative.

C. An on-site visit will be made by a college representative during the project.

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Appendix B

HAGERSTOWN JUNIOR COLLEGE

Hagerstown, Maryland

Criteria for Evaluating
Return to Industry Proposals

Return to Industry projects are selected for funding using the following criteria:

_____ 1. The length of time that an instructor has been out of the industrial setting.
10 points

_____ 2. A description of the technological advances or revisions that have occurred within the industry since the instructor last worked in the industry which change significantly that industry's production design or delivery system.
15 points

_____ 3. Demonstration that the changes within the industry are related to skills or knowledge needed by the student and, therefore, required of the instructor.
15 points

_____ 4. Availability and willingness of an industry to provide the learning experience needed by the instructor. The proximity of the industry and the comprehensiveness of the experience will be taken into consideration.
10 points

_____ 5. The comprehensiveness of the industrial experience package prepared by the instructor. Particular attention will be paid to the integration of the industrial learning experience and the skills and knowledge to be transmitted to the students.
10 points

60 points total

OIA/1-18-79

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